

## EPA and partners release new blueprint to protect and restore Long Island Sound

By [HAN Network](#) on October 22, 2015 in [Community](#), [Connecticut](#), [News](#) · [0 Comments](#)

The Long Island Sound Study has released a new Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for restoring and protecting the Long Island Sound, setting 20 ambitious targets to be achieved by 2035.

Among these goals are: a reduced number of beach closures due to sewage pollution; a reduced area of the Sound with unhealthy oxygen levels; improved water clarity; restored coastal wetlands; increased open space; and a reduction in the amount of plastic marine debris in the Sound. This plan builds on the successes of the original 1994 CCMP by incorporating scientific and technological advances, incorporating the current needs of Sound communities, and addressing new environmental challenges, while emphasizing sustainability, climate change resilience, and environmental justice.

In addition to being a critical environmental and ecological resource for the region, the Long Island Sound and its watershed is a critical economic driver, providing tens of billions of dollars in estimated annual economic goods and services annually.

“Hurricane Sandy changed forever how we think about our coasts and coastal communities,” said Judith A. Enck, EPA Region 2 Administrator. “The plan highlights that actions can be taken to adapt to climate change, making Long Island Sound healthier and our communities and economy more resilient.”

“This CCMP update builds on the progress made to date and provides an action plan for 21st century challenges, said EPA New England Regional Administrator Curt Spalding. “This plan outlines action on climate change impacts and pollution management. It is important that the plan makes sustainability and resiliency an integral part of achieving a cleaner, healthier Long Island Sound for people to enjoy.”

“Long Island Sound is an important ecological and economic treasure, and the new CCMP provides a strong blueprint for all partners to follow in keeping it on the road to recovery,” said Marc Gerstman, Acting Commissioner of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. “New York State remains committed to advancing this ambitious agenda, and we look forward to working with our federal, state and local partners to build on the successes we’ve achieved over the last 20 years and utilize our best available science to tackle the emerging threats of climate change, nitrogen pollution and habitat loss that face this incredible ecosystem.”

“People from all over this region enjoy the use and beauty of Long Island Sound and benefit from its resources thanks in part to the dedication of those who took action in 1994 to create and adopt a plan to restore and protect it from the impacts of 300 years of human development,” said Robert Klee, Commissioner of Connecticut’s Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). “It is now our obligation to make certain we leave a Sound that future generations are able to enjoy and benefit from as well. The new Long Island Sound CCMP builds on the successes we have achieved, details new present day initiatives and sets goals for the future. Key areas of focus in the plan will empower us to meet the challenges like climate change, and continued land use and development pressures, in order to ensure the future of this precious resource.”

The new CCMP includes 20 targets for the Long Island Sound, to be achieved by 2035.

These include:

- Reducing beach closures due to sewage by 50%.
- Reducing areas of water with unhealthy oxygen levels by about 28%.
- Improving water clarity to support eelgrass.
- Increasing the area of natural vegetation within 300 feet of all streams and lakes in New York and Connecticut to 75%.
- Restoring 3,000 acres of coastal habitat by 2035.
- Conserving an additional 4,000 acres of open space in Connecticut and 3,000 acres in New York.
- Reducing the five-year average of marine debris collected from the sound by more than 300 pounds per mile surveyed.

Sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, as well as nonprofit and community groups and businesses, the Long Island Sound Study partnership first released a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan in 1994. Implementation of that plan in the past 20 years has yielded tangible results.

- Under an innovative, bi-state program to reduce nitrogen pollution, there are now 40 million fewer pounds annually of nitrogen discharged from wastewater treatment facilities to Long Island Sound. In summer 2015, the area of the Sound affected by unhealthy levels of dissolved oxygen was the second smallest recorded in 28 years.
- More than a million gallons of recreational boat sewage are kept out of the water each year by the 'No Discharge Zone' for vessel waste in Long Island Sound, which was established by Connecticut and New York.
- The area of eelgrass beds, an important habitat for fish and shellfish, has increased by 29 percent between 2002 and 2012.
- Restoration of 1,650 acres of habitat, and the reopening of 317 miles of river and stream corridors to fish passage since 1998. Since 2006, Long Island Sound Study partners have protected 2,675 acres of open space and coastal habitat through easements and land acquisitions.

The CCMP was developed through a collaborative process involving federal, state and local governments, university scientists, and interested representatives of business, environmental, and community groups. The plan was finalized after careful consideration of 250 comments from the public on a draft version released in late 2014. Information on the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan is available at [longislandsoundstudy.net/CCMPinfo](http://longislandsoundstudy.net/CCMPinfo). Visit [longislandsoundstudy.net](http://longislandsoundstudy.net) for general information on the Long Island Sound Study.

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